

1.0 Introduction

The City of Calexico (the City) has prepared this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the construction and implementation of the 111 Calexico Place (hereinafter referred to as the "proposed project"), the development of Commercial Highway (CH) land uses, including a Class III tribal gaming Casino Facility and Hotel, on an approximately 232-acre site within the City of Calexico. The Class III tribal gaming casino cannot be operated on this site without additional approval by the federal government and environmental documentation prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. Therefore, a separate Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

The proposed project requires the following discretionary actions by the Calexico Planning Commission and City Council, approval of a Specific Plan, General Plan Amendment, Tentative Tract Map, approval of a Development and Site Plan Review Process from the City of Calexico. The Calexico City Council will also be asked to certify this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project.

This EIR is intended to serve as an informational document for public agency decision makers and the general public. The EIR describes the objectives and components of the proposed project and any potentially significant adverse environmental impacts that may be associated with the planning, construction and operation of the project, and identifies appropriate feasible mitigation measures and alternatives that may be adopted to reduce or eliminate these impacts.

1.1 Legal Requirements

The City of Calexico is the lead agency for the preparation of this EIR as defined by California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA (Public Resources Code Sections 21000, et seq.)). The City of Calexico will review and consider the 111 Calexico Place EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2007031092) in its decision to approve, revise or deny the proposed project.

This EIR has been prepared in conformance with the requirements of the CEQA and the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Guidelines) published by the Resources Agency of the State of California (California Code of Regulations Title 14, Sections 15000 et seq.) and the rules, regulations and procedures for implementation of CEQA adopted by the City of Calexico.

The EIR is intended to provide information to public agencies, the general public, and decision makers, regarding the environmental impacts of the proposed project. Under the provisions of CEQA:

"The purpose of an environmental impact report is to identify the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the manner in which those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided" (Public resources Code Section 21002.1(a)).

1.2 Scope of This Environmental Analysis

The development of the proposed project is subject to the requirements of CEQA because it is an action that has the potential to result in a physical change to the environment and is subject to discretionary approval by a public agency (in this case, City of Calexico). The City of Calexico began the process for the project by preparing an Initial Study and sending out a Notice of Preparation (NOP), including the initial study and project description (Appendix A of this EIR). The NOP was circulated on March 19, 2007 and identified that an EIR would be necessary. The NOP provided an opportunity for interested public agencies and the general public to comment on the scope of the Draft EIR. The NOP was circulated for a 30-day public review period. The public review period ended on April 18, 2007.

The Initial Study is a tool used to identify the environmental issues of the project based upon information known about the project. Based upon the Initial Study prepared by the City of Calexico for the proposed project and the comments received on the NOP, the following environmental topics were identified as potential environmental impacts of the project; and, therefore are the environmental topics that will be analyzed in this Draft EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Hazards & Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Noise
- Public Services
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Geology/Soils

1.3 Project Background

The project site is currently zoned Industrial with Rail Served (IR) and Industrial (IND) with a Specific Plan known as the "Calexico International Center," which was approved by the Calexico City Council in March 7, 2002. The Calexico International Center was a master-planned, mixed-use development project. A Program EIR titled *Calexico International Center Program EIR*, was prepared for this project and was adopted in 2001. Some of the information provided in this EIR is based on the Program EIR for the Calexico International, which hereinafter is referred to as the "Previous EIR". This previous project required several discretionary actions, including Specific Plan, annexation of the project site to the City of Calexico, amendment of the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, approval of a tentative subdivision map, and a street vacation. The annexation of the project site required approval by the Imperial County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The project required the approval by the City of Calexico to rezone the site from a pre-zone of Industrial (IND) and Commercial Highway (CH) to Planned Development (PD). The Tentative Tract Map expired and therefore, no longer controls future development and the City zoned the site IR and IND. The project site subsequently was sold to a new developer (Hallwood Calexico Investments, LLC) and a new Specific Plan and Tentative Tract Map are being prepared for consideration by the Calexico City Council. Chapter 2.0 of this EIR describes the new project (hereinafter referred to as the proposed project) being proposed on this project site.

1.4 Public Participation Opportunities

1.4.1 Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meetings

As discussed above, the City of Calexico prepared a NOP/Environmental Initial Study (IS) for the preparation of an EIR for the proposed project on March 19, 2007. The NOP/IS was distributed for a 30-day public review period, which started on March 19, 2007 and ended on April 18, 2007. The NOP/IS was mailed to the city, county, state and federal agencies, other public agencies, and various interested private organizations and individuals (Distribution list is provided in Appendix A). The purpose of the NOP/IS was to request public agency and public input regarding the potential impacts of the proposed project, and the scope and content of environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. Comment letters in response to the NOP/IS were received from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 11, and Quechan Indian Tribe, Ft. Yuma Indian Reservation.

The City held an EIR public scoping meeting on April 16, 2007 for the project. Public notice of this scoping meeting was provided by the City via the following methods: 1) the City mailed a meeting notice to the city, county, state and federal agencies, other public agencies, and various interested private organizations and individuals; and, 2) a newspaper notice was published in the Imperial Valley Press April 6, 2007. At this meeting members of the public were invited to ask questions on the environmental review process and comment on the scope and content of the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR. A summary of the comments presented at this scoping meeting and written comments received during the 30-day public review period for the NOP/IS are provided in Appendix A of this EIR.

1.5 Availability of Reports

This Draft EIR is available for public review at the City of Calexico, Development Services Department, 608 Heber Avenue, Calexico, CA 92231. Copies are available to the public upon payment of a charge for reproduction. Copies are also available for review at the City of Calexico Library, 850 Encinas Avenue, Calexico, CA 92231. Documents at these locations may be reviewed during regular business hours. The Draft EIR is also posted on the City of Calexico's website at www.calexico.ca.gov, under the Development Services Department/Planning Division link.

1.6 Comments Requested

Comments of all public agencies, organizations, and individuals are invited regarding the information contained in this Draft EIR. All comments on the Draft EIR should be sent to the following City of Calexico contact:

Armando G. Villa, Director of Development Services
City of Calexico
608 Heber Avenue
Calexico, CA 92231

Following the 45-day public review period of the Draft EIR, all written comments received on the Draft EIR will be responded to by the City in writing. The written comments and City responses to those comments will be incorporated into a Final EIR. The Final EIR will be certified by the City at the time the project is considered for approval.

1.7 Structure of this EIR

1.7.1 EIR Volume

The structure of the EIR is identified in the Table of Contents. The EIR Volume is organized into thirteen sections:

Section ES, Executive Summary provides a summary of the proposed project, including a summary of project impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives.

Section 1.0 Introduction provides a brief introduction of the project, legal requirements, purpose of an EIR, project background, availability of reports, and comments requested on the Draft EIR.

Section 2.0 Project Description provides a detailed description of the proposed project including project characteristics, project objectives, land uses, and discretionary actions.

Section 3.0 Environmental Setting provides a general description of the environmental setting of the project. A more detailed description of the environmental setting is provided within each environmental issue discussion located within Section 4.0.

Section 4.0 Environmental Analysis provides a detailed description of the environmental setting and analysis of project impacts and identifies mitigation measures designed to reduce significant impacts.

Section 5.0 Cumulative Impacts provides a listing and brief description of past, present and reasonably anticipated future projects, and a description of the resulting cumulative impacts of the proposed project.

Section 6.0 Analysis of Long-Term Effects discusses the project's growth inducing impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes, and unavoidable significant environmental impacts.

Section 7.0 Effects Found Not to be Significant provides a discussion of project-related environmental effects found not to be significant.

Section 8.0 Alternatives to the Proposed Project provides a description of, and analysis of alternatives to the proposed project.

Section 9.0 References lists the references for the preparation of the EIR.

Section 10.0 EIR Preparers and Persons and Organizations Contacted lists the individuals and companies involved in the preparation of this EIR as well as all the individuals and agencies consulted and cited in this EIR.

Appendix A, Notice of Preparation and Responses provides a copy of the NOP/Environmental IS that was prepared and comments received in response to the NOP and scoping meeting comments.

1.7.2 Technical Appendices – Volume I and Volume II

EIR Volume II provides the technical reports used in the preparation of this document. These technical reports include: Traffic Impact Study, Air Quality Impact Analysis, Noise Impact Analysis, Biological and Western Burrowing Owl Surveys, Cultural Resources Phase I Survey, Historical Resources Survey, Phase I Environmental Assessment, Utilities Master Plan, Water Supply Assessment, and Geologic Hazards Evaluation.

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